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ABSTRACT

Two major recommendations are offered to teacher education reform efforts: (1) increased collaboration for both leadership and program planning in teacher education; and (2) changes in the roles of public schools and universities in the preparation of teachers. The recommendations emerged initially from a study that focused on discrepancies between practices taught in university coursework and practices observed in clinical settings. The recommendations were expanded and reinforced by a second study of collaborative program planning by university and school district representatives. This paper describes six categories of documented discrepancies between practices taught in the content of university coursework and practices observed during field experience, with description of resulting dilemmas experienced by student teachers; and describes changes in teacher education programs that resulted from collaborative planning to address the dilemmas. Findings of the two studies indicate that improvement of practice requires collaboration in the context of mutual respect and understanding, with parity of leadership and shared decision making. It is suggested that in order to improve teacher education programs, program planners listen to the voices of both preservice and experienced teachers.
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DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN PRACTICES TAUGHT AND PRACTICES
OBSERVED: DILEMMAS FOR STUDENT TEACHERS AND DIRECTION
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

This paper responds to the theme of "Where Are We Going? Who Will Lead Us There?" with two major recommendations: 1) increased collaboration for both leadership and program planning in teacher education, and 2) changes in the roles of public schools and universities in the preparation of teachers. The recommendations emerged initially from a study that focused on discrepancies between practices taught in university course work and practices observed in clinical settings. The recommendations were expanded and reinforced by a second study of collaborative program planning by university and school district representatives.

Purposes

This paper is directed to the following purposes: 1) to describe six categories of documented discrepancies between practices taught in the content of university course work and practices observed during field experiences with description of resulting dilemmas experienced by student teachers; and 2) to describe changes in teacher education programs that resulted from collaborative study of the discrepancies and from collaborative planning to address the dilemmas.

Description of The Studies

Two university teacher education programs characterized by year-long concurrent course work and field experience provided a context for the collection of discrepancies between what students learned in courses and what students

observed in classrooms. The first study (Study I), focused on discrepancies, emerged from continuing concern that field experiences may negate learning from university course work may further a utilitarian perspective to teaching (Zeichner, 1980), and may promote a stabilization of the "status quo" of teaching (Goodlad, 1991). The study intent was to document the discrepancies and study descriptions from student teachers faced with the dilemmas of "sorting out truths and realities" (Tabachnick, Popkewitz, & Zeichner, 1980). An additional goal was the development of a base for communication and understanding between universities and school districts.

The second study (Study II) used data on discrepancies as the focus of communication and study for representatives of a university and six neighboring school districts. The communication led to year-long collaborative development of a teacher education program. A case study of the planning process was developed to include descriptions of the context, narratives of the collaborative sessions, and documentation of the program plan.

Narratives of the communication between university and school district representatives provided further insight for understanding the discrepancies between what is learned and what is observed by students learning to teach. Documentation of the collaborative planning sessions provided a model for studying programs and for both educational and teacher education reforms.

Study I: Discrepancies Between Practices Taught And Practices Observed

Preservice teachers have raised concerns about the value of teacher education course work, and most often credit student teaching as the most important component of their preparation. Additional concerns are reported by university faculty and classroom teachers, and are the foundation of Study I. This study provided an opportunity to document impressions and experiences which have repeatedly characterized work in teacher preparation. Study I will be presented through a description of the context (two teacher education programs), approach (methodology), findings (categories of discrepancies and examples), and implications.

Context of Study I

This study was conducted at two universities in the Portland, Oregon area. Both teacher education programs are fifth year programs which require students to have completed a bachelor's degree prior to admission. One university, Portland State University, is a large public institution located in an urban areas. Students enrolled in teacher education are generally older (late 20's to 50) and have had experiences in other careers prior to entering the program. The other university, Pacific University, is a small private institution located in a rural setting. Students in the fifth year/MAT program range in age from 21 to 50 years. The sample for Study I consisted of 29 secondary and 30 elementary students from Portland State University and 12

secondary students from Pacific University.

Both teacher education programs integrated course work with a year-long clinical placement with the intent of connecting theory and practice. Feedback from students and faculty indicated that discrepancies between practices taught and practices observed interfered with the connection. Such feedback concurred with research literature describing the dissonance typically experienced by student teachers (Alverman, 1981; Erdman, 1983; Silvernail & Costello, 1983).

The literature describes clinical experiences as the "indisputably essential element" in the professional preparation of teachers (Conant, 1963). With a recognition that clinical experiences are the means to provide the most effective preparation to teach, both the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force (1986) recommended a minimum of one year of field experience in teacher education programs.

In contrast to the support for clinical practica is literature questioning the role and effects of the experiences on preservice teachers. Zeichner (1980, 1984), Goodlad (1990) and others have raised the issue of perpetuating the status quo in teacher education by relying on practicing teachers to indoctrinate neophytes. Research has demonstrated that preservice teachers abandon and negate university learning about pedagogy in favor of a utilitarian perspective (Zeichner, 1980). Conflicting assessments of the value of clinical experiences in teacher education literature prompted this study of discrepancies. Looking closely at the discrepancies between what students are taught in university

courses and what they observe in classrooms could lead to better understanding of the dissonance in clinical experiences and course work and better program planning.

Approach of Study I

The study intent was to document the discrepancies by recording examples of differences between instructional practices taught in university courses, and practices observed in classrooms. The recording took place over a one year period at two universities. Student input about discrepancies was encouraged in journal writing, in class discussions, and in varied assignments.

At the end of a year, the discrepancies were analyzed into six major categories. Each category was organized with examples and narratives. In addition, narrative descriptions of the dilemmas caused by discrepancies were probed to study the preservice teachers' thinking.

Findings of Study I

The six major categories of discrepancies were planning, assessment, grouping, practice activities, classroom management, and instructional variation. University colleagues confirmed the categories with similar anecdotes describing the same differences which emerged from the data collection.

The first category, planning, presented significant discrepancies. In their courses, students were encouraged to write objectives to guide choice of activities and assessment, and to determine a clear and manageable

organization for teaching and learning experiences. Research on teacher planning predicted students' observations about the lack of written objectives. Yet, experienced teachers described "knowing where you are headed" as one of the three most important variables in the planning process (Borko & Niles, 1987). Morine-Dersheimer (1979) described lesson images or mental plans made by experienced teachers which were seldom reflected in written plans.

In the study, students were asked to bring in a sample of a lesson plan. It was an appropriate assignment for study of the planning process. Two of the elementary preservice sample and one of the secondary preservice sample group were able to bring in a sample of a lesson plan. The consequence was a familiar question, "Why are we learning how to do this kind of planning when teachers don't use lesson plans?".

When the teachers in Clark and Yinger's 1979 study were asked to list and describe the most important types of planning conducted during the school year, unit planning was most often identified as the most important type of plan. The total group of preservice teachers were unable to obtain more than one sample of any type of unit plan from their practicum setting.

Preservice teachers in the study described the planning of experienced teachers as focusing on content or subject matter and activities. They questioned whether they could limit their planning to those components without a sense of direction, and an approach to assessing whether the content was taught or the activities promoted learning. They heard

regular mention of lack of time for planning, and suggestion that objectives and assessment are implied in activities or are specified in textbooks and manuals. They also observed many lessons that clearly lacked direction and any indication of learning. After writing lesson plans of their own, they described their dilemma as one of concern about time to do such detailed planning and of concern about the quality of teaching without it.

Borko and Niles (1987) suggest that preservice teachers will benefit from an understanding of how experienced teachers plan, and why their planning looks different from the planning process being taught at the university. Conversations about purposes of planning and varied formats of planning at different levels of experience may provide insights to reconcile the discrepancies for both preservice and experienced teachers.

Within the second category of teaching practice, assessment, two major discrepancies appear often for preservice teachers. One concerns the purpose of assessment, and one concerns the form(s) of assessment. Preservice teachers were taught to consider assessment for the purposes of diagnosing student need, ability, and interest and for prescribing appropriate learning activities. They often report the use of pretests and other strategies which look like diagnosis. Their confusion results from scenarios like this:

Fifth grade students all take a pretest on the weekly

spelling unit each Monday. A number of students regularly score a 100% on the pretest, and then proceed to be taught, participate in the same activities, and complete the same assignments as the students who scored in a range of levels below 100%. This pattern is repeated throughout the school year with the implication that pretest scores do not influence teaching practice.

Another purpose of assessment taught in university courses was a formative one. Ongoing assessment can provide information about student misunderstanding, a need to reteach, appropriateness of the difficulty level or pace, and so on. Most of the ongoing assessment observed by preservice teachers yielded grades to be recorded in a book, and appeared to stop there. Again, mental planning may be occurring, but little evidence of such was seen by preservice teachers. They report that even when assessment indicates confusion or a lack of understanding, the week proceeded as "planned" according to page numbers of texts or schedule in the plan book.

Stiggins (1988) encouraged teacher educators to provide comprehensive preparation in assessment practices. One major recommendation concerned the development and use of multiple forms of assessment. And so preservice teachers learn about varied "pencil and paper" tests, interviews, observations and recording forms, checklists, portfolios, self assessment, and work samples. In this study, preservice teachers brought in assessment samples gathered and observed over a three month period. Most of the samples were either "pencil and paper"

tests or questions asked in class. A familiar question was posed, "Why are you encouraging us to use all those creative measures, when we probably won't get to do anything with them?" The dilemma again became one of choosing between practice that supports student differences and variations in curriculum, and practice that appears efficient and widely accepted.

Within the third category, classroom management, course work focused on environments, expectations for behavior, routines, consequences for inappropriate behavior, communication, and relationship building. Preservice teachers adopt the most humanistic approaches to classroom management from models like Teacher Effectiveness Training, Glasser's Classrooms Without Failure, and Dreikurs' "logical consequences". Yet, the most commonly observed model in their field experiences was Assertive Discipline in a range of forms. In addition, lengthy lists of strategies and responses to student behavior denied concern for individual students or a communication of trust.

The journals and observations of preservice teachers report "put downs", inconsistent responses, belittling, negative expectations, consequences unrelated to behavior, lack of routines, unclear directions, and developmentally inappropriate behavior limits. Their journals reveal the overwhelming problems influencing classroom life, and the lack of resources which restrain teachers' abilities to cope or remedy situations. Their writing reflected an

appreciation of the magnitude of classroom management, but also expressed a discouragement and concern with what was observed under the circumstances.

The not so subtle message regarding management and discipline during clinical experiences was "keeping children well behaved and quiet." Preservice teachers were observed selecting lessons on the basis of the amount of noise potential, sensing that they would be judged on their ability to "control" classes. Arnstine (1990) describes a situation similar to those reported by our students:

In her classes on campus, the prospective teacher may talk about the benefits of active learning, of the cultivation of interest and excitement in the subject, or of the human need for socialization and interaction. While the conversations on campus may make her uneasy or angry or guilty about school practices, she finds that in her practice teaching she is expected to deliver a predetermined curriculum in a very short time while maintaining a quiet and orderly classroom.
(p.240)

Arnstine warns that under such conditions, "natural inclinations to be rational and caring give way to teaching methods that are authoritative and promote competition" (p. 240). The dilemma was often resolved by maintaining the "status quo."

The fourth category, practice, causes intense worry and confusion in preservice teachers. They were urged to use practice activities only for skills and understandings which

have been taught first. This implied that substantive teaching develops the understandings required by a practice activity, or that the skill needed for the practice activity has been developed beforehand. Most reports from classrooms described instead, a brief direction giving episode followed by a long period of practice activities. Preservice teachers struggled with interpreting this pattern, and reported observing students who are frustrated and confused. The research on seatwork from students' perspectives describes student understanding of the practice activities as "something to get done" (Anderson, 1985). This perception from students doesn't seem surprising when viewed within preservice teachers' observations.

In university classes, preservice teachers were encouraged to provide variety in practice assignments. Elementary students reported endless seatwork worksheets that repeat the same practice procedures throughout the year. Secondary students described the most common and often assigned homework task, "Read the chapter and answer the questions at the end." The importance of variety and purpose in practice appeared uncertain in these observations.

The fifth category, grouping strategies, presented a major discrepancy related to the use and benefits of homogeneous grouping. Preservice teachers generally reported homogeneous groups in the elementary schools, with reading and math often taught in a traditional three group approach. They also raised questions about the continuation of such

approaches in view of research indicating negative benefits for students. Those same questions were later replaced by management concerns when preservice teachers began teaching classes. The dilemma became one of how to teach an entire class of students without traditional ability groups.

At the secondary level, preservice teachers observed tracking, with the choice of curriculum driving the level at which students were tracked. Their impressions described the practice as one to be accepted and followed without question.

Preservice teachers were most interested in the cooperative learning approach, and were eager to see it in practice. Good and Brophy (1991) suggest that teachers implement cooperative learning activities at least as, "alternatives to traditional independent seatwork." Preservice teachers did report seeing many instances of cooperative learning, with variations in use from random activities to the core of instruction. Questions and concerns were raised about grading practices associated with cooperative learning projects and about classroom management within the "loosely structured environment."

The final category of discrepancies was instructional variation. It was with great enthusiasm that preservice teachers participated in a month-long demonstration of teaching models. Sessions after each model demonstration were spirited, questions and discussion were intense, and interest was high. At the completion, the assignment was to observe several of the models in action and record a narrative of the teaching. Many of the preservice teachers

had already been in classroom placements for about six weeks conducting numerous observations, interviews, assisting teachers, and tutoring students. There was immediate concern about the assignment, "What if I don't see any of the models?" "I'm not sure that the teachers I observe even know about the models." "How could I find teachers who use the models?" The dialogue ended with decreased enthusiasm and a sense of discredit for the models. After class, one secondary preservice teacher wrote that he felt fortunate because, "His teacher did use one of the models, and that she was so good, and that the students just loved her class."

When the assignments were turned in, 3 of the total sample of preservice teachers saw actual models in use. One student described three extremely interesting lessons, and when asked about them, spoke excitedly about the wonderful teaching she observed. Another wrote at length about the teaching he observed. "All I ever saw was a daily lecture, followed by students working at their places on assignments...day after day...it was pretty boring for me and it must have been for the students. I didn't even see parts of the models, not even an advance organizer." This narrative was discouraging in itself, but concern about the discrepancies was heightened by a later entry in his journal. He wrote, "I really think that my time in the schools was more valuable than the time I spent in my university classes. It was more practical, challenging, and fun."

Implications from Study I

The most important and immediate learning which occurred from the year of study was the certainty that continued discussion of discrepancies had be to a regular part of our university course work. Examining the differences was a critical process for preservice teachers and for university faculty. Discussions of the discrepancies yielded new insights for course revision and for arrangements with schools. Program planning with classroom teachers had been previously focused on supervisory matters concerning preservice teachers. The need to expand the dialogue and extend it to the discrepancies for mutual understandings became critical.

One of the components of teacher education left relatively untouched by the reform movement with few exceptions is the role of classroom teachers in programs. Although the reform recommendations included a call for their increased role in university course work (Holmes, 1986) and for increased attention to their selection for field experiences (Nagel & Driscoll, 1991), little change has resulted. This study of the discrepancies reiterated the need for attention to both of these recommendations. If classroom teachers were involved in course work about planning, their insights and descriptions of how planning changes with experience could enrich the content. On the other hand, if it was determined that the most effective teachers did extensive planning and could provide samples of detailed plans, perhaps that could be developed into criteria for selection of those teachers to guide preservice teachers.

As the completion of Study I approached, the concept of professional development center or school had come to the forefront of ongoing reform recommendations (Kennedy, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986; Lieberman, 1988). The kind of collaborations between universities and schools described by the concept represented an ideal response to the discrepancies. If university faculty taught regularly in the school and public school faculty taught regularly in the university (as suggested by Kennedy, 1989), discrepancies might disappear, or they might become a rich agenda for reflection.

The solutions are not new. The discrepancies are not new. When preservice teachers faced the traditional dilemmas of teacher preparation, they "took their cues from the field even in contrast to lessons learned in education courses" (Goodlad, 1990). Study I yielded one more powerful reason to collaborate. Improvement of practice is one which must extend in both directions, university preparation and field experiences in schools, if teacher education and education in general is to be truly reformed.

Study II: Collaborative Restructuring of Teacher Education

This second report emerged from collaborative study of the findings and implications of Study I. This report is structured with descriptions of the context (setting, sample, and literature perspectives), approach (procedures and data sources), findings, and implications.

Context of Study II

Current literature is abundant with directives for and examples of professional development school models (Kennedy, 1989, 1990). One theme of these models is collaboration between universities and school districts in the preparation of teachers. The reform of teacher education prompted by the Carnegie task force and the Holmes Group reports called for such collaboration in both planning and providing programs in teacher education. Many reform recommendations have been unanimously supported and addressed nationwide, but there is a paucity of examples of substantive input by classroom teachers beyond traditional mentoring in clinical experiences. Cooperating teachers in schools are often "unaware of the overall goals of the preparation program" (O'Neil, 1991, p.3).

With those concerns and recommendations in mind, representatives from one university and six school districts began a year-long process of discussion and planning. The first phase was one of collaborative study. The study foci included the following: the discrepancy data from Study I; shared concerns of teacher educators, classroom practitioners, and school district administrators; and the knowledge base in teacher education. The second phase was one of collaborative planning focused on a teacher education program which addressed the discrepancies, the shared concerns, and the insights of the knowledge base.

The sample for Study II consisted of the following: eight university faculty, 12 school district administrators,

and 18 classroom teachers. University faculty and school district administrators participated in the first phase and became an advisory group for the second phase. All of the classroom teachers, assisted by representatives of the university faculty and school district administrators, continued the study process and participated in the second phase, the planning process.

Approach of Study II

The approach of Study II was structured in the previously described two phases and designed as a qualitative study. The first phase consisted of large group discussions and individual participant reflections prompted by the following: collaborative study of the discrepancy data and the knowledge base in teacher education; and a sharing of the concerns and dilemmas faced by teacher educators and school districts. The final decision of the first phase was to initiate and support a collaborative planning process in which teacher education faculty and classroom teachers developed a teacher education program. During this second phase, the group used the discrepancy data and the teacher education knowledge base as a foundation for planning. The teacher group and the administrator group also developed instruments to survey their colleagues' perceptions about the quality of their preparation for teaching. The survey intent was to extend the information base with which to make program decisions. The group met weekly for four months to design program goals, structure, content, requirements, and

instruction.

Data sources for the first phase consisted of transcripts of group discussions and individual reflective writing. Data sources for the second phase consisted of individual journal recordings, transcripts of planning sessions, individual summary reflections, and the actual program plan.

Findings of Study II

Although the program planning process has been completed for the purpose of implementation, the participants of this study are committed to the concept of ongoing planning. As preservice teachers participate in the new program, there will be regular evaluation, feedback and revision. This aspect of the program prevents traditional presentation of findings at this time. The results of the collaborative work in Study II are formatted in two categories - discussion themes and program design qualities. It is expected that additional insights will emerge from the implementation process and accompanying evaluation.

The first category, discussion themes, provides powerful direction to both university and classroom instruction. Throughout the program planning process, a significant theme was the importance of modeling pedagogical content and demonstrating practices for preservice teachers. If preservice teachers are to value and use a repertoire of teaching models and strategies or varied assessment approaches, they must be modeled both in university courses and classroom placements. University faculty and classroom

teachers must both take responsibility to show preservice teachers how to teach. Kennedy (1991) describes it as "accompanying the intellectual understanding of teaching with the logistical implications" (p. 17).

From the first discussion theme came a concern for the selection of those who would influence preservice teachers. Criteria for the selection of university instructors and classroom cooperating teachers must consider the practices identified in the discrepancy data. Faculty and teachers must consistently model the kind of teaching that preservice teachers are being taught.

The third discussion theme emerged as the planning process proceeded to completion. As participants finalized the program plan, the theme became a commitment to ongoing communication and planning. Comments such as, "If we could work on this program design for a few more months..." and "I am not certain that we would ever be finished" were finally addressed with, "We've just got to try these ideas, evaluate them, and make program changes as we go along. We have to continue getting together."

The final theme emerged from the journal writing, individual comments, and final summary reflections. It was one of mutual respect and appreciation. On numerous occasions, classroom teachers contemplated the work of planning a program to prepare teachers with comments such as, "This is overwhelming!" and "We should use much of what is already being done at the university - it makes sense now."

One teacher reported, "I have known that I had something to contribute to the profession beyond what I was doing in my classroom, but now that I am working on this program, I feel like I am challenged and that my ideas can make a difference. Teacher education is really significant work."

In a final planning session, several teachers reported reading a thematic issue of Educational Leadership on teacher preparation and referred to Goodlad's (1991) recommendation of "collaboration with schools as equal partners" (p. 13). "They're talking about us," commented one participant with enthusiasm.

On the other side, those representing the university left most of the planning sessions impressed and inspired by the insights contributed by the classroom teachers. It was described as a "powerful learning experience" by faculty. There were feelings of affection and admiration, a collegiality of mind and heart.

By the end of the planning process, teachers talked intensely about the importance of selecting additional teachers for the program, and expressed a concern for continued discrepancies in classroom placements. The conversations were reminiscent of frequent university discussions about clinical placements.

The second category of findings was program design. Three characteristics of the new teacher education program were emphasized throughout the planning process. First, integrated content characterized the design to be implemented. There were no distinct course separations, only

blocks of content that have logical connections. This design characteristic required flexibility in scheduling, instruction, and staffing, but again the commitment to model teaching practices prevailed.

The second quality was one of concurrent content and practice with ongoing communication between those teaching content and those modeling and mentoring practice. Specific assignments for classroom practice linked with pedagogical content were designed for each block of content during the planning process. To achieve closer connection between content and practice, classes have been scheduled at school district locations. Those schedules were formatted for half day classroom observations and practice and half day program instruction. In addition, classroom teachers reiterated the importance of classroom teachers following the content syllabus with the preservice teachers.

The final characteristic was one of classroom teacher involvement in program instruction. Teachers identified experts in their districts and offered their own expertise for the instruction of specific content. Many had studied at the university and made recommendations for specific faculty involvement in program instruction. A group of the teachers reviewed appropriate textbooks and journal readings and made recommendations for the preservice teachers.

Implications of Study II

The most important implication of the collaborative

study and planning was that insights and inspiration for teacher education can result from long-term and substantive collaboration between university and school districts. The gap between the two institutions has been traditionally marked with disrespect, territorialism, and lack of understanding. It was especially significant to hear from a principal that four of her teachers were stunned to realize that, "the university is actually going to use the program as we planned it" and that, "our input really was valued." During the months of planning, there was apparently a concern that the design would not be taken seriously.

Summary

The discrepancies which were documented in Study I are not new or unique. The importance of collaboration was realized early in the history of teacher education, so the approach of Study II was not a current innovation. When the two studies are considered, however, what is realized is that improvement of practice requires collaboration in the context of mutual respect and understanding, with parity of leadership and shared decision making.

Teacher education reform has led to a myriad of program changes, but dissatisfaction continues within the profession. Kennedy (1991) describes the conceptual orientation of teacher education programs as more influential than structural arrangements. She recommends that our reform conversations need to focus on the content and character of programs. The experiences described in the studies of this paper confirm the importance of such conversations. In order

to study and improve teacher education, we must listen better to the voices of preservice and experienced teachers.

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